

CHINESE DYNASTIES, PART TWO

The Song Dynasty Through the Qing Dynasty, 960 to 1911 CE

PRODUCED BY SELENA LAI AND WAKA TAKAHASHI BROWN
STANFORD PROGRAM ON INTERNATIONAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL
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HARDCOVER BINDER WITH CD-ROM

Reviewed by Alan Whitehead

Chinese Dynasties Part Two: The Song Dynasty through the Qing Dynasty is the second of a two-volume curriculum unit from Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE).¹ Anyone with exposure to the curriculum products previously offered by SPICE will find themselves on familiar ground with this unit.

This unit introduces students to Chinese history and provides an in-depth view of China from the Song Dynasty through the Qing Dynasty. Each dynasty left behind a unique legacy, from cultural and artistic achievements, to new religions and philosophies, and innovative ideas about government, society, military strategy, and economy. The materials produced by Selena Lai and Waka Takahashi Brown comprehensively cover the Chinese Dynasties from 960 to 1911 with lessons that can be differentiated and adapted for grades five through twelve.

The chronological arrangement of the unit allows for students to progress through Song (960 to 1279), Yuan (1279 to 1368), Ming (1368 to 1644), and Qing (1644 to 1911), the last Chinese dynasty. Students have the opportunity to comprehend the dynastic cycle, while comparing and contrasting cultural developments in China. Students analyze the development of civilizations and the institutions that evolved through each dynasty. They build on prior knowledge to understand how the dynasties laid the foundation for some modern Chinese institutions and beliefs in spite of the repeated fragmentation and reunification of historical China. The basic tenets of Chinese religions, philosophies, belief systems, and appreciation of the cultural achievements and legacies of each dynasty become clear through this all-inclusive curriculum. Evaluation of acquired knowledge is evident in the culminating activities of producing an extensive timeline, participating in a reader's theatre based on Chinese folk legends, and/or analyzing the symbolism in classic Chinese art.

There are four lessons in the unit that include an outstanding historical background for each dynasty that provides instructors with much more than adequate knowledge to cover all the essentials and beyond, even for advanced high school classes. Each lesson contains organizing questions, introductory material, objectives, connections to curriculum standards, materials, maps, equipment lists, teacher preparation notes, and procedural timelines for each day's presentation. Higher order thinking skills are emphasized throughout, and group work predominates with well-designed and balanced lessons. Examples of opportunities for differentiated instruction are included in the

study of the Yuan and Ming eras. The lesson on the Yuan Dynasty offers students a chance to channel their creativity by acting out an excerpt from a Yuan drama "The Soul of Qian Nu Leaves Her Body." The legacy of the Ming is clarified through a scavenger hunt activity that incorporates centers and either independent or small group learning. There are also instructions for the presentation of a puppet show in the study of the Qing dynasty.

Chinese Dynasties offers adaptability for instruction from upper elementary through middle school to high school classes. Reproducible copies of handouts are included, along with assessment activities. Rich illustrations on the CD give extensive explanations in the lesson guide. For full implementation, the recommendation is that five to six fifty-minute class periods be allocated for each lesson, but individual lessons may be used independently for instructional activities or as enrichment. Supporting resources found in the appendices include a Pinyin Pronunciation Guide, List of Key Dates, and an extensive Glossary.

Each unit could be taught in its entirety, or lessons may be adapted as extensions and enrichments to classes of social studies, English, art, music, literature, geography, and drama. The lessons could easily be tailored for intellectually gifted students in the elementary or middle grades. There are a variety of activities that range from scroll making, map studies, timelines and skits, and puppet show production, that allow for differentiated instruction that encompasses the learning modalities of all students. Prose, poetry, lyrical writing, oral history, and dramatics offer opportunities for student-led and student-centered learning for the whole class. Historical cultural diversity is presented through activities and projects. Students can work independently or in groups, as all of the essential information is available to them. The use of this curriculum by both novices and experts in a variety of disciplines is almost limitless. *Chinese Dynasties Part Two* offers a wealth of lessons and supplementary materials for instant classroom use.

A CD-Rom with twenty-two excellent high resolution JPEGs that can be used with all lessons accompanies the three-ring binder. Also on the CD is an Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) file with nineteen images and background information, as well as key questions. One does wonder why the many paper pages in the notebook, labeled "transparencies" (and meant for teachers to reproduce as actual transparencies for overhead projectors), were not also furnished as JPEGs or even offered as PowerPoint presentations. In summary, this is a well designed, user-friendly, nicely organized, and easily adaptable curriculum that is well worth considering as an addition to your teaching tool kit.

For further information, please contact: Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE), Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Encia Hall, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-6055, <http://spice.stanford.edu>, email: SPICE-sales@stanford.edu. ■

NOTE

1. Waka Takahashi Brown and Selena Lai, *Chinese Dynasties, Part One: The Shang Dynasty through the Tang Dynasty—1600 BCD to 907 CE* (Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education: SPICE, 2006). The first volume was reviewed in this journal, Alan Whitehead, *Education About Asia*, 13 (1): 2008, 44.

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